Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

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1. (Currently amended): A method for controlling the absorption of a liquid sample through an absorbent layer, comprising the steps of:

   (a) providing an air gap defined by an absorbent layer, at least one side wall and a translucent window;

   wherein the air gap is a chamber containing ambient air pressure, and

   wherein the absorbent layer is permeable to gas when dry, but is relatively less permeable to gas when at least partially saturated with liquid;

   Limitation found.

   (b) applying a liquid sample to the absorbent layer on the side opposite to the air gap such that the air pressure of the air gap is increased, thereby controlling liquid sample absorption by the absorbent layer[;

   whereby sample absorption is controlled by presenting the release of air from the air gap].

2. (Previously presented): The method of claim 1, wherein the sample is a human body fluid.
3. (Previously presented): The method of claim 2, wherein the fluid is a blood sample.
4. (Currently amended): An apparatus comprising an absorbent layer, at least one side wall and a translucent window, wherein the absorbent layer, at least one side wall[s] and translucent window define an air gap, and wherein the air gap is a chamber containing ambient air pressure; and wherein the absorbent layer is permeable to gas when dry, but is relatively less permeable to gas when at least partially saturated with liquid; and wherein the absorbent layer, at least one

sidewall, translucent window and air gap are adapted such that application of a liquid sample to the absorbent layer increases the air pressure of the air gap, thereby controlling liquid sample absorption by the absorbent layer.]

5. (Previously presented): The apparatus of claim 4, wherein the window is non-fogging.
6. (Previously presented): The apparatus of claim 4, wherein the absorbent layer contains a reagent that indicates the presence of an analyte.
7. (Previously presented): The apparatus of claim 4, further comprising a second layer in contact with the absorbent layer.